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ABSTRACT

A number of characteristics distinguish human relations or sensitivity training from other forms of experience-based education, including learning goals, desired outcomes, and assumptions about the learning process. Although research evidence on the effectiveness of human relations training is ambiguous, due to difficulties of research design and measurement, the following conclusions may be drawn: (1) Many individuals report significant behavioral changes following human relations training, (2) individuals who experience sensitivity training are more likely to improve their leadership skills than those who do not, and (3) the incidence of serious mental disturbance during training is estimated to be less than 1% of all participants. The new media consultant must be aware of the assumptions and applications of human relations training and other new areas of the applied behavioral sciences to achieve significant innovation in educational systems. (JH)

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HUMAN RELATIONS TRAINING AND THE INNOVATION CONSULTANT [1]

ED034317

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HUMAN RELATIONS TRAINING AND THE INNOVATION CONSULTANT

If facts are the seeds that later produce knowledge and wisdom, then the emotions and the impressions of the senses are the fertile soil in which the seeds must grow.

Rachael Carson - The Sense of Wonder

The third session opened with comments by a few members who noted that they felt clearer about the purpose of the T-Group. They had just listened to a theory session concerned with emotional patterns and group behavior, and they now felt that the task was to bring out on the table and discuss some of the emotional feelings of various group members so that the group could better understand its problem.

From the beginning, Don, an intense, eager, apparently anxious member, had rushed in with suggestions for group action. He had been the first to move on the opening day with a suggestion leading toward introductions. However, as the sessions continued, his interventions had decreased in relevancy to what was happening in the group. Most of his contributions were

lengthy, and all of them dealt with some topic that was far from the group and usually rooted in some personal situation he faced in his work back home. His interventions came at times when the group was moving toward a decision--usually toward a decision to discuss behavior within the group. One member of the group asked Don directly why he always brought up something of his own just when the group was beginning to discuss a group problem. Don hotly denied that he had deliberately done so. He said he had been sitting there, thinking both about the group and his own problems, and it seemed to him the questions he had in his own situation were ones that would interest and help the group. After all, he added, his company was sending him here to get something out of the program.

At this point, another member asked, 'If you spend all the time bringing your problem in, how will the rest of us get any help on ours? It seems to me that we will get the most help as we figure out what we are doing here and how we can improve the situation.'

A third member rushed in, however, to defend Don. 'Everybody,' he said, 'must have the right to speak. If Don has something to say to the group, no matter what it is, we should all listen to it. I, for one, think that Don's

problems are very serious problems, and I would like to hear him talk about them at greater length.'

Don took this as sanction to continue describing a particular back-home situation. His description continued for nearly five minutes. Attention in the group continued to fade, and restlessness became apparent.

After Don had finished his statement, one trainer commented on the growing lack of attention when individual back-home problems were discussed, as compared with the greater attention when present group problems were being discussed. At the same time, he added, a number of group members specifically stated that they did not wish to work on present group problems. The trainer indicated that this seemed to present a dilemma to the group. (Bradford, Gibb, & Benne, 1964, pp. 144-145.)

This episode illustrates a number of the features of the experience-based learning innovation called the T-Group. The T-Group, along with other elements such as lectures and skill exercises, forms the basis for "human relations training."

This paper is an effort to (1) summarize briefly the state of the art and science of human relations training, and (2) illustrate how the applied behavioral sciences can help understand the role of media specialist as an innovation consultant.

Human Relations Training

There are a number of characteristics that distinguish human relations training from other parts of the human potential movement and from other forms of experienced-based education. Among them are (1) the learning goals, (2) the desired outcomes and (3) the assumptions about the learning process that are associated with human relations training.

Goals

At one level of abstraction there are a number of very general goals. These result from the scientific and philosophical values underlying the method. Schein and Bennis (1965) describe five such metagoals: (1) an expanded interpersonal awareness and recognition of choice points. Choice points are the irregular, critical points in a person's life where normal expectations are violated. These are the "forks in the road" where choices are made — consciously or unconsciously. (2) A spirit of inquiry or a willingness to try out new behavior; (3) an increased authenticity in interpersonal relations; being able to accept the experience of being oneself. As one becomes more able to accept and respond to his own experience he becomes less inclined to respond primarily to others' expectations; (4) an ability to act in collaborative and interdependent ways rather than in authoritarian and hierarchical ways; and (5) an ability to resolve conflict through open and creative problem solving instead of

through power strategies such as coercion, manipulation or horse trading.

Underlying these metagoals is the implicit notion that openness is desirable in interpersonal relationships. By openness is meant behaviors by person A that communicate to person B the present interior experiences of person A. The interior experiences that are relevant are usually his feelings, wishes and perceptions about the activity in which they are both presently involved. Openness is sometimes confused with self-disclosure or "personalness"; the latter denotes sharing past events or past interior states. Since openness relates to phenomena experience, and shared at the present time, being "open" is likely to result in more growth-producing relationships than is being "personal." This is because in an open relationship each person has maximum information about himself as well as about the other, and therefore maximum alternatives and freedom for choice.

Metagoals such as these underlie the format of a human relations laboratory. They guide staff decisions and shape stated goals such as those that follow. These are described in the literature and are likely to be communicated to participants beginning a laboratory:

1. Self-insight. Human relations training aims to bring about greater awareness of one's self and one's own behavior in a social context. By exploring the feelings and perceptions of others about one's behavior in an atmosphere of trust, one can learn to understand why he acts in certain ways in certain situations. Increased self-awareness is seen as resulting in less defensiveness and more openness and authenticity.

2. Sensitivity. Increased sensitivity to behavioral cues (gestures, body position, voice, etc., as well as verbal stimuli) and increased accuracy at inferring emotions underlying these cues, are seen as major goals. Increased empathy, responsiveness, and spontaneity are seen as resulting from greater sensitivity.

3. Group process knowledge. What are the types of events that facilitate or inhibit group functioning? What unstated rules governing behavior exist and how do such rules develop? What kinds of behavior cause changes in morale, activity level, and group productivity? Systematic ways of learning about such variables are frequently viewed as appropriate goals.

4. Diagnostic skills. Achieving the first three objectives provides the basis for diagnostic ability, i.e., the ability to use relevant explanatory categories for organizing appropriate data about the social behavior of self, others and the "organization."

5. Action skills. The goal of increasing action skills is at the interpersonal rather than the technical level, i.e., the ability to intervene in social situations in order to facilitate behavior that increases member satisfactions or productivity.

6. Learning how to learn--the ability to continually monitor and modify one's behavior. It refers to one's psychological stance toward himself in social interaction; an attitude toward self and others that is manifested in a high commitment to becoming part of an open, self-renewing interpersonal system.

Range of human relations activities

Because of differing emphasis and priorities among these objectives, one finds a great range of learning experiences under the rubric of human relations training. Figure 1 describes the continuum. At one end of the personal growth goals of self-awareness and sensitivity are emphasized; at the other more organizational goals such as cognitive understanding and specific skills in influencing group and inter-group phenomena are stressed.

Other dimensions may be noted. Depending on one's theoretical point of view, one might also describe the personal growth activities listed as more "person-oriented" versus "organization-oriented"; or as more "emergent" as opposed to more "planned"; or as more "facilitating" rather than "intervening." Decisions about which treatment methods are most useful should depend on careful diagnosis of client needs and on one's assumptions about how learning and growth take place.

Learning outcomes

Outcomes of human relations training can be classified in terms of potential individual, group, and organizational learning and provide a second means of distinguishing human relations training from other modes of experience-based learning.

1. Individual learning. Most participants in human relations training gain a picture of the impact that they make on other group members. A participant can assess the degree to which that impact

Figure 1

CATEGORIZATION OF HUMAN RELATIONS TRAINING TREATMENTS (Gibb, in press)

Treatment Designation	Central aims	Definitive activities or characteristics	Modal description
Creativity-growth	Creativity Awareness Releasing human potential	Induced experiences designed to expand human awareness	Otto & Mann (1968)
Marathon	Personal growth Greater intimacy	Uninterrupted interpersonal intimacy	Stoller (1968)
Emergent	Personal growth	Absence of leader Non-programmed, unpredictable, emergent activities	Gibb & Gibb (1968b)
Authenticity	Openness Authentic encounter	Interventions and experiences focused on openness	Bugental (1965)
Sensitivity	Personal competence Group effectiveness Organizational effectiveness	Focus on here and now experiences, and on group processes	Bradford, Gibb & Benne (1964)
Programmed	Personal growth, and/or competence Group effectiveness Organizational effectiveness	Experiences initiated and/or directed by absent leaders	Berzon & Solomon (1966)
Micro-experience	Interpersonal skills Group effectiveness Organizational effectiveness	Limited time (2 to 20 hours; 1 to 2-1/2 days) Restricted depth	Bradford, Gibb & Lippitt (1956)
Inquiry	Skills of inquiry Group effectiveness System effectiveness	Data-gathering, quasi-structured experiences Focus on explicit and predictable individual and group learnings	Miles (1965)
Imbedded	Team effectiveness Organizational effectiveness	Training experience imbedded in sequential and continuous organization-based program of inputs, data-gathering, and experiences	Argyris (1962) Friedlander (1968)
Discussion	Knowledge, insight Improved interpersonal relations	Some blending of group discussion, case method, demonstrations, and theory inputs	Hacon (1961)
Instructional	Knowledge, insight Improved interpersonal relations	Instructions by lectures, demonstrations, discussions, and readings	Hacon (1961)

corresponds with or deviates from his conscious intentions. He can also get a picture of the range of perceptions accompanying any given act. It is as important to understand that different people may see the same piece of behavior differently—for example, as supportive or antagonistic, relevant or irrelevant, clear or ambiguous—as it is to understand the impact of any given individual. Rarely do all members of a group have even the same general perceptions of a given individual or a specific event.

Some people report that they try out new behavior that they have never tried before. This experimentation can enlarge their view of their own potential and competence and provide the basis for continuing experimentation.

2. Group learning. One learns about the forces which affect the group such as the results of different methods of making decisions, the norms controlling the amount of conflict and disagreement that is permitted, and the kinds of data that are gathered, e.g., early in the life of a group, cognitive data tends to be gathered more frequently than affective data; as the group develops, a higher proportion of affective data is gathered. Concepts such as cohesion, power, group maturity, climate, and structure can be examined using the experiences in the group to better understand how these same forces operate in the back-home situation.

3. Organizational learning. Status, influence, division of labor, and styles of managing conflict are among organizational concepts that may be highlighted by analyzing the events in the small group. Subgroups that form can be viewed as analogous to units within an organization. It is then possible to look at the relationships between groups, examining such factors as effectiveness of communications, stereotyping, and competitiveness versus collaboration.

A participant is able to examine the kinds of assumptions and values which underlie different leadership styles. The opportunity to link up a philosophy of leadership with specific behaviors that are congruent with or antithetical to that philosophy makes human relations training particularly relevant to understanding the organization (Seashore, 1968).

Underlying assumptions about learning.

The following assumptions about the nature of the learning process distinguish human relations training from more traditional models of education:

1. Learning responsibility. Each participant is responsible for his own learning. What a person learns depends upon his own style, readiness, and the relationships he develops with other members of the group.

2. Staff role. The staff person's role is to facilitate the examination and understanding of the experiences in the group. He helps participants to focus on the way the group is working, the style of

an individual's participation, or the issues that are facing the group.

3. Experience and conceptualization. Most learning is a combination of experience and conceptualization. A major aim is to provide a setting in which individuals are encouraged to examine their experiences together in enough detail so that valid generalizations can be drawn.

4. Authentic relationships and learning. A person is most free to learn when he establishes authentic relationships. When such relationships are established one is able to increase his sense of self-esteem and decrease his defensiveness. In authentic relationships one can be open, honest, and direct with one another so that he is communicating actual feelings rather than masking feelings.

5. Skill acquisition and values. The development of new skills in working with people is maximized as a person examines basic values underlying his behavior, as he acquires appropriate concepts and theory, and as he is able to practice new behavior and obtain feedback on the degree to which his behavior produces the intended impact (Seashore, ibid.).

Research Evidence

The research evidence on the effectiveness of human relations training is ambiguous. This state of affairs, along with the fact that attitudes of social scientists toward human relations training tend to be bi-polar and strong, results in contradictory interpretations of the evidence that does exist. Consequently, in evaluating research reviews, practitioners find the evidence supports the hypothesis that training leads to behavior change. Non-practitioners review the same literature and find it indicates little or no change as a result of training.

The ambiguity surrounding the research evidence seems due primarily to research design difficulties. Illustrative of the most formidable are:

1. Desired outcomes are broad and frequently abstract changes in intrapersonal and interpersonal behavior, including interrelated combinations of values, knowledges, attitudes, motivations, perceptions and specific behavioral skills. The goal of "increased sensitivity," for example, involves all of the above elements. A research design and learning theory that specifies the relation between such outcomes and appropriate learning experiences is yet to be developed.

2. If changes do occur the problem of observing and measuring remains. Although a number of sub-problems exist, there are two major

issues: first, one needs to specify changes occurring from beginning to end of training; second, one needs to describe how such changes transfer and are manifested in the back-home setting. Does one really learn to express his feelings more accurately and is he able to do so on the job? Or, as some critics suggest, has he simply learned to apply a new set of verbal symbols to the same experience? Both kinds of questions need specification in terms of cognitive and affective outcomes along with more precise and imaginative approaches to observation and measurement.

3. As in research in other areas such as psychotherapy, the provision for adequate control groups is a continuing difficulty. Briefly, the issue is that if a subject is in a control group it may bias his and others' perceptions of him; if a subject has been through training it may give him and others a "set" to expect changes.

These three problems illustrate typical difficulties encountered in attempting to rigorously assess the effects of human relations training. Despite this confusion, however, it seems the following conclusions can be drawn about the effects of human relations training:

1. Many individuals report extremely significant changes and impact on their lives as workers, family members, and citizens. This kind of anecdotal report should be viewed cautiously in terms of application to job settings, but it is consistent enough that it is clear that human relations training experiences can have a powerful and positive impact on individuals. Roughly two-thirds of the participants

are seen by themselves or others as increasing interpersonal skills after attendance at laboratories. This figure represents an average across a number of studies.

2. People who attend sensitivity training programs are more likely to improve their leadership skills than those who do not (as reported by their peers, superiors, and subordinates). Although definition of "leadership skills" vary with different studies there is evidence citing improved interpersonal behavior (e.g., accuracy of communications, changes in morale level) as well as studies showing improvement in productivity.

3. The incidence of serious stress and mental disturbance during training is difficult to measure, but it is estimated to be less than one percent of participants, and in almost all cases occurs in persons with a history of prior disturbances (Schein & Bennis, 1965).

This section has attempted to describe human relations training—it's purpose, philosophical beliefs, assumptions about learning and research base. The media consultant will, of course, draw his own conclusions. As he goes about the task of planning ways to influence learning in the affective domain, it is hoped that he gives some consideration to these hypotheses:

1. People learn more when they have the responsibility for designing their own learning experience.

2. People learn more when they have the skills that enable them to influence other people and, thereby, the social context of learning.

3. People learn more when their emotions and perceptions are seen as providing relevant and appropriate information.

4. People learn more when the people around them model the kind of behavior that is seen as desirable.

5. People learn more when they are clear about their relationships to significant others.

6. People learn more when self-assessment of performance is as valued as external assessment.

The New Media Specialist as Innovation Consultant

What can be said about the relevance of the applied behavioral sciences, of which human relations training is one part, for the media specialist? I wish to focus on one part of this question and assume that the media specialist is among other things an "innovator" who has two functions:

1. to develop and implement innovation;

2. to develop and implement "innovative systems," i.e., he has the mission of helping others become innovators. He attempts to create persons and situations which are increasingly innovative and decreasingly dependent upon him.

Thus, in addition to technical competency, this role requires other competencies in order to build and maintain innovative systems, i.e., help others become innovators. It is to these latter competencies—those needed for introducing and maintaining innovations—that I wish to address the rest of this paper. I think the applied behavioral sciences are relevant for providing some mapping and planning of this process.

Before describing a way of looking at the process of planned innovation let me state some assumptions about people, organizations and change.

<u>Some assumptions</u>:

1. Most individuals wish to grow and develop.

2. Most individuals want their organization to succeed.

3. Most individuals tend to be resistant to innovation, particularly if goals or means toward them are unclear.

4. Individuals tend to support innovation more if they have participated in planning it.

5. Individuals can learn to improve their diagnostic skills to better analyze a situation and plan appropriate change.

6. Any change in a sub-system is likely to affect the whole system.

7. Every change effort involves changed attitudes. Attitudes must be unfrozen, new ones learned, and refreezing achieved.

8. A basic change is to create conditions where those affected by the change can systematically and meaningfully plan it and carry it out.

9. To change a sub-system, relevant aspects of the environment must also be changed.

10. The place to begin an innovation effort is where stress or strain or an identified problem exists—not necessarily at some arbitrary point in the system.

11. If basic structural changes are contemplated, change should start at the policy-making level.

12. A personal relationship of trust and mutual confidence must be established with each "client" as early as possible.

13. The innovator must deal with the dependency relationship usually existing in a helping relationship.

14. He should concentrate on diagnosis of the problem and avoid the temptations of early solutions.

15. He should control his own needs to control the situation or the client.

16. He should avoid

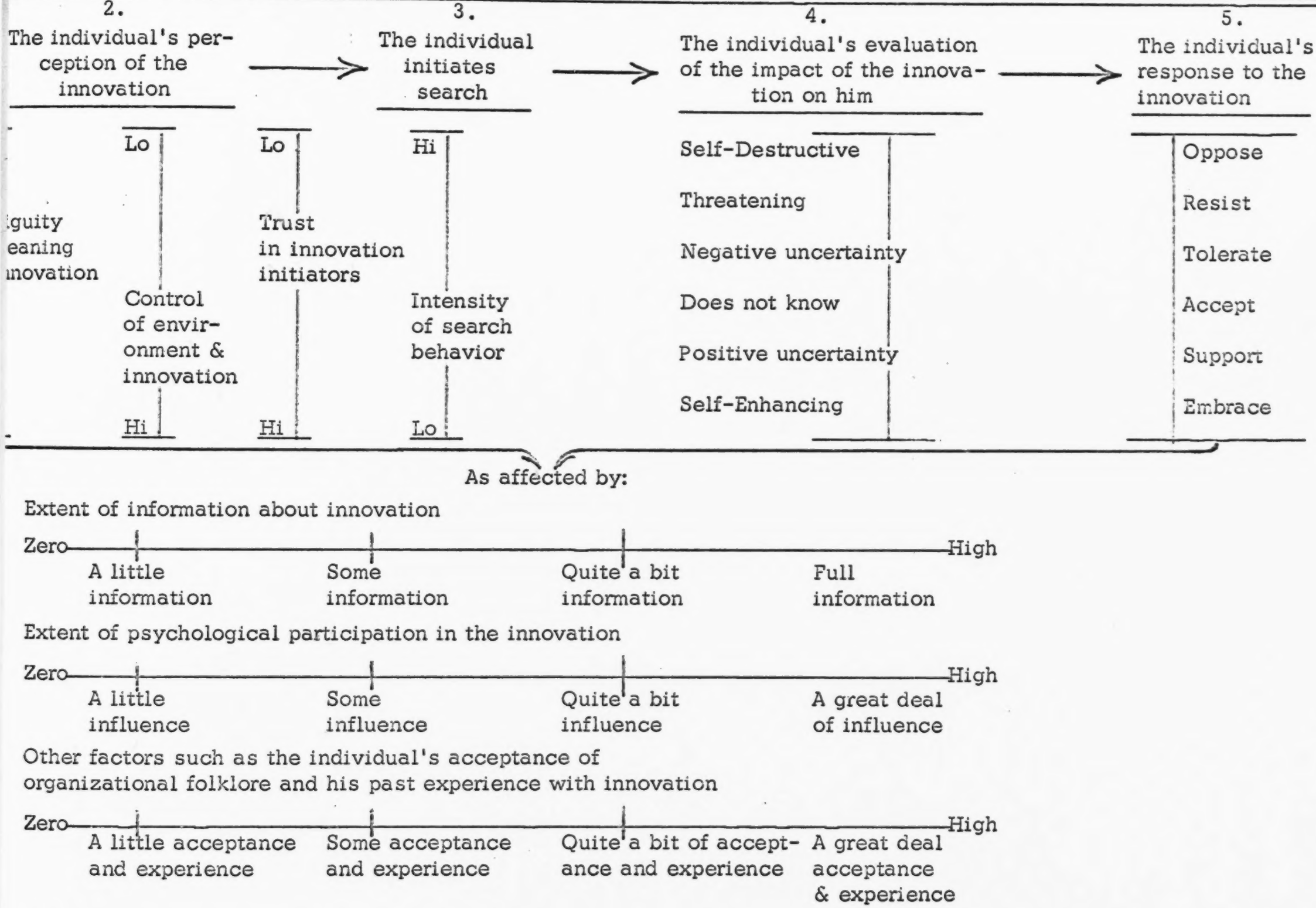
- defending
- advising
- premature persuasion
- over-controlling.

17. The innovator must build in plans for stabilizing and maintaining the innovation without undue dependence on him (Beckhard, 1967).

These assumptions can give one a framework for understanding certain critical issues in the innovation process, but it is a framework for "our ball park," the point of view of the innovator. How do things look, how is the innovator viewed from "their ball park," the educational constituencies involved? Figure 2 provides a way of understanding the experiential world of the person whom the innovator hopes to influence.

One is vividly reminded of the fact that it is the person's perception of the innovator and the innovation, not objective reality that determines response. These human or "people" issues are at least as important as the technical quality of the innovation, especially when viewed from the "consumer's" frame of reference. Much effort is devoted

Figure 2. Model for Understanding an Individual's Response to Innovation*



sed in the Program for Specialists in Organization and Training
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*Adapted from an instrument used in the
Development, NTL Institute for Applied

to human relations training in industrial organizations in order to assist persons in adapting to change in their jobs. A relatively sophisticated behavioral science technology, frequently called "organization development" is resulting.

Innovation consultation

One can think of the innovation process from the standpoint of the knowledges, sensitivities and skills required by the innovator-consultant. He needs to be able to:

1. Diagnose the needs and problems of the client system. What is trouble and what is the cause of the trouble?

2. Assess the motivation of the system to change itself. What are resources for and resistances to innovation? Is there awareness of the need for innovation? Are there feelings that innovation will be threatening? Rewarding?

3. Assess his own motivations and resources as the agent for influence and change. Why do I wish to help this person or this system? What are the limits of my ability to help?

4. Develop and maintain a working relationship with the client system. This means establishing a mutually acceptable and widely understood picture of the responsibilities of the innovator in helping the client solve his problem.

5. Choose the most effective role. Should the innovator counsel? Demonstrate? Encourage? Mediate? Communicate a wider view of reality to the client?

6. Select appropriate targets for innovation. Of all possibilities what are most significant? Realistic? What should be the first step in an experiment in innovation?

7. Encourage and support innovative attempts. What rewards can be provided for new responses? Remove rewards for old responses. Is the innovation consistent with the institutional standards?

8. Terminate (or redefine) the helping relationship. When and how does the innovation consultant leave the client alone?

Except for termination, these phases come up over and over in the process of introducing innovations and helping others to become introducers of innovations.

There is a technology for this process which is emerging from applications of the behavioral sciences to organizational change efforts. One part of this technology is human relations training. Other parts are described in the materials cited in the list of references. And still others are quickly developing. It is exciting to work toward innovation and renewal in educational systems; it is especially exciting to aim toward the emergence of self-innovating, self-renewing educational systems.

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